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ABSTRACT

In spring 1992, a study was conducted to determine factors associated with the attrition of faculty at the University of Florida (UF) from fiscal year (FY) 1989 through FY 1990. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relative level of turnover at UF compared to other institutions, the demographics of and motives given by leaving faculty, and the effect of faculty rank on turnover. Data were collected through surveys of the deans of all 13 Colleges at UF and demographic data provided in a 1992 University Fact Book. Study results included the following: (1) over the period, 209 faculty members left, comprising 7% of the total full-time equivalent faculty and within acceptable levels compared to attrition at other institutions; (2) women and ethnic minorities left in disproportionately high numbers, accounting for 37.3% and 13.4% of the turnover group, but only 16% and 10% of all faculty, respectively; (3) 42% of the faculty left the university for work at another academic institution and 43% left academia entirely to work in the business, industry, and private practice sectors; and (4) the lowest ranking faculty members left in larger numbers than the highest ranked, with only 16% of the turnover group holding the rank of full professor, compared to 52% holding the rank of assistant professor. Contains 12 references. (TGI)

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Faculty Turnover: An Analysis by Rank, Gender, Ethnicity and Reason

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FACULTY TURNOVER: AN ANALYSIS BY RANK, GENDER, ETHNICITY AND REASON

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History

What is a normal turnover rate for faculty at any given university? Do gender, ethnicity, and salary compensation issues influence faculty decisions to leave?

At the University of Florida faculty salaries and financial exigency were central issues in 1992. All salaries across the Florida State University System (SUS) had been frozen for two consecutive fiscal years. These salary freezes began during fiscal year (FY) 1989 with a midyear reduction in the State of Florida's General Revenue Fund allocation and continued through two additional midyear reductions. This condition of financial exigency persisted in Florida into the next two academic years, leaving faculty without a salary increase for three consecutive years.

Other fiscal-related effects were experienced by the faculty: salary compression, inadequate research facilities, funding for a limited number of research and teaching assistants, and insufficient support staff. Some faculty complained that although they did not want to leave this University, there was a need to seek employment elsewhere, using a new job offer as leverage in order to win a salary increase as an inducement to remain. Yet even in those instances where such an increase was granted and written into contract, the increase was delayed indefinitely because of the state workers' salary freeze.

An empirical analysis of the turnover at the University was proposed to address four questions. First, was the University experiencing an exceptionally high rate of faculty turnover? Second, was the turnover group disproportionately weighted by demographic factors of gender or ethnic background? Third, what were the reasons given by the faculty who left? Fourth, was turnover influenced by faculty rank?

Predictor Variables of Faculty Turnover

A review of the literature led to the conclusion that certain segments within the faculty of an institution will turnover in greater proportions than other segments for reasons that differ depending on rank or gender. However, much of the body of literature on faculty turnover was contradictory or unclear. Based on the findings reported below, assistant professors, untenured professors, and faculty whose academic careers were young were those most likely to turnover (Christal & Hector, 1980; Ehrenberg, Kasper,& Rees, 1991; Smart, 1990). Gender, ethnicity, and salary were variables that were reported as being inconclusive as indicators. Some research has been reported as showing that, at the full professor level, men were more likely to leave than women, and there was no gender difference at lower faculty ranks (Ehrenberg et al.; Smart). Other researchers have reported greater attrition for women and for members of ethnic minority groups (Hensel, 1991; Stepina & Campbell, 1987). In some studies, salary was found to be given as a significant reason for leaving only by assistant professors, not by those of higher rank (Ehrenberg et al.; Smart); however, in Weiler's (1985) study of associate and full professors, salary was rated as a very important reason to leave by a sizable proportion. The prestige of an institution was reported to be a variable that influenced turnover in different directions depending on faculty rank (Ehrenberg et al.; McGee & Ford, 1987; Weiler).

Ehrenberg, Kasper and Rees studied faculty turnover using American Association of University Professors (AAUP) data from two decades of the AAUP annual faculty survey, reporting little variation in turnover rates across time or type of institution. At doctoral-granting institutions, the annual retention rate ranged from 89-92% for full professors, 89-93% for associates, and 81-86% for assistant professors. Faculty salaries as a variable were found to be significant only in the retention of assistant and associate professors, not full professors, and the magnitude

of the relationship was reported to be small. The relative prestige of an institution was reported to be a significant variable whose direction varied according to faculty rank. At more prestigious institutions, the retention of assistant professors was reported to be higher than at lower-rated institutions, but lower for associate and full professors. Gender was reported to be a significant variable only at the full professor level; at that level turnover was found to be greater among men. At lower faculty ranks there was no genderrelated difference, a finding reported also by Smart (1990).

Smart proposed a causal model of turnover based on the selfreported intentions to leave the employing university of faculty at 190 different institutions, both public and private, accumulating data from 2,648 respondents. He reported that faculty whose academic careers were relatively young were more likely to leave than those more seasoned within their careers. In fact, Smart reported finding career age to be the only exogenous variable having a significant, direct causal effect on the turnover intentions of both tenured and nontenured professors. Among tenured professors, men were reported to be more likely to leave than women, a relationship that was strongest among the tenured professors who were also the most productive in terms of research and publications. Marital status was not a significant predictor of turnover for either sex. In Smart's study, salary was only a significant turnover issue among non-tenured faculty, who as a group were also the lowest-paid.

McGee and Ford (1987) also surveyed faculty from a wide range of colleges and universities across the country, examining two characteristics of each faculty member: research productivity and self-reported intention to leave. They reported two significant predictors, and each was negatively correlated with a faculty member's intention to leave: the prestige of the employing institution and factors relating to the work environment. The work-related factors included extrinsic rewards such as salary and laboratory space, but also the degree of administrative influence wielded by faculty at the institution and the warmth of interpersonal relationships with colleagues and administrators. They concluded that "some determinants of faculty turnover are administratively controlled; thus, certain strategies may help keep faculty members" (p. 14). They noted that some strategies, such as encouraging greater faculty participation in governance, would be expected to decrease the time faculty spent on research; therefore, they concluded that a balance should be reached between strategies that encourage longevity at the institution and those that promote research productivity.

Weiler (1985) studied the actual turnover of associate and full professors at a single state-supported institution, the University of Minnesota. He reported that among this group, 63.1% rated personal factors as a very important reason for leaving; whereas, salary or salary potential received a very important rating by only 46.2%, and the reputation of the new employer was rated very important by only 29.2%. Weiler did not include assistant professors or entry-level faculty in this study.

Stepina and Campbell (1987) and Christal and Hector (1980) studied faculty attrition rates and tenure status within the entire State University System (SUS) of Florida. In Stepina and Campbell's analysis in terms of gender and ethnicity, men and members of ethnic majorities reportedly earned tenure at a higher rate than women and members of ethnic minorities. The tenure rate for men was reported to be 46% compared with 32% for women. Regarding ethnic background, the tenure rate was reported as 45% for whites, 27% for blacks, 25% for Hispanics, and 32% for other minorities. These authors concluded that the greater attrition of women and minority faculty could not be attributed to a negative tenure decision, because nearly one-third of newly-hired faculty had voluntarily terminated by the end of the third employment year, before being eligible for tenure. However, these disparate rates in tenure may suggest retention concerns for women and minority faculty based on Christal & Hector's analysis in which non-tenured professors were found to have the lowest retention rates.

Gender equality was the subject of Hensel's (1991) work. She reported that women in academe experienced higher attrition rates and lower career mobility than men, concluding that gender discrimination is a reality that still persists.

A Demographic Analysis of Faculty Turnover at The University of Florida

The scope of this study was an analysis of the attrition of persons holding academic positions at the University of Florida during a two-year period, FY 1989 through FY 1990. The Colleges of the University were individually surveyed using an instrument that targeted for analysis the demographic patterns of faculty turnover. The purpose

was to attempt to explain the dynamics of turnover as concerned issues of climate and faculty support. It was proposed that an understanding of the dynamics would help to find solutions to any problems that were identified through this study.

Method

During the spring of 1992, the deans of all 13 Colleges of the University were surveyed by mail over the signature of the Provost. The survey collected data on two variables: first, the number of people who voluntarily left the University during FY 1989 and FY 1990; second, regarding each person who left, information about faculty rank, ethnicity (coded as White or Minority), the reason for leaving, and the quality of the move. For the purposes of this study, these definitions applied:

Reason for Leaving was defined and scored as one of the following:

a. the individual was moving for career enhancement within the discipline or to a similar college/university setting,
b. the individual left for a career change that could include movement to academic administration or private practice (primarily in the nursing and medical community) or to business and industry,
c. the individual left for family reasons, for education, or for unclassified reasons--other.

The Quality of the Move was defined and scored using six classifications of quality. The U.S. News and World Report (1991) annual edition ranking the top colleges and universities in the United States was used to objectively rate the quality of the institution. The classifications included whether the individual left for one of these reasons:

a. moved to an institution ranked in the top 25,
b. moved to an institution ranked as a peer with the University of Florida, which is in the top 50,
c. moved to a lower-ranked institution,
d. moved to an unranked institution,
e. went into business or industry,
f. went into private practice, or
g. entered employment in other areas.

The University of Florida Fact Book (1992) provided descriptive data about the population of all faculty at the University which totalled 3,022 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in FY 19 9 0 .

The findings illuminated demographic trends in turnover when the survey results were compared with information from the Fact Book, including a comparison of the proportional membership of each group in the population of university faculty with the proportional representation among the turnover group of faculty who left the university.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Faculty Turnover by College

College	Count	% in Turnover Group
Agriculture	12	5.74%
Achictecture	7	3.35%
Business Admin.	3	1.44%
Education	4	1.91%
Engineering	13	6.22%
Fine Arts	7	3.35%
Hlth/Human Perf.	6	2.87%
Journalism	2	0.96%
Lib. Arts/Science	3	15.31%
Law	1	0.48%
Medicine	93	44.50%
Nursing	12	5.74%

Table 1 shows that 209 faculty members departed the University during the period under study. This number comprises fewer than 7% of the total FTE faculty of the University. An overall retention rate of 93% was concluded to be high compared with what is reported in the literature (Ehrenberg, Kasper, & Rees); therefore, the turnover rate at the University was within an acceptable level.

The Colleges varied considerably in the number of faculty departing, ranging from a high in Medicine with 93 people leaving, or 44.5% of the total turnover, to a low in Law of one person, at 0.48% of the total. Liberal Arts faculty produced the second highest turnover (32 people, or 15.31% of the total). The Colleges of Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Engineering, and Nursing clustered in the middle range, while turnover was low at the Colleges of Journalism, Business Administration and Education.

Table 2
Faculty Turnover by Gender

Sex	Count	% Turnover Group	% All Faculty*
male	131	62.68%	84%
female	78	37.32%	16

N=209
*Source: University of Florida Fact Book, 1992.

The demographic descriptors of the persons leaving were examined next. Table 2 shows that women left in greater proportions than men, when comparing their composition among the faculty at large with those who departed the University. When compared with the percentage of women on the faculty as a whole, it appears that women left the University at more than twice the frequency of their total membership on the faculty, at 37.32% versus 16%. Men left the University at a lower rate; 84% of the faculty was comprised of men whereas only 63% of the turnover group was male.

Table 3
Turnover by Ethnic Background

Ethnic backqround faculty*	Count	% turnover qroup	% all faculty*
White	181	86.6%	90%
Minority	28	13.4%	10%

N=209
*Source: University of Florida Fact Book, 1992.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of faculty turnover by race. While the proportionate disparity by ethnic background was not as great as by gender, minorities were over-represented in the turnover group (13.4%) compared with their proportional presence in the faculty at large (10%). By extension, whites, comprising 90% of all faculty, were less likely to leave; only 86.6% of this category left.

Table 4
Turnover by Faculty Rank

Faculty rank	Count	% turnover group	% all faculty*
Full	35	16.75%	40%
Associate	56	26.79%	28%
Assistant	108	51.67%	25%
Other	10	4.78%	7%

N=209
*Source: University of Florida Fact Book

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Table 4 shows the breakdown by academic rank for the total turnover group, comparing those percentages to the proportional makeup by rank of all faculty at the University. Table 4 shows that almost 52% of the faculty who left the University during the period of this study held the rank of assistant professor, a group that accounted for only 25% of the faculty as a whole. These findings support the conclusions of the body of literature reported above.

Table 5
Faculty Turnover by Rank by Gender

Rank	Men		Women	
	Count	% of men in turnover group	Count	% of women in turnover group
Full	27	20.61%	8	10.26%
Assoc.	36	27.48%	20	25.64%
Asst.	62	47.33%	46	58.97%
Other	6	4.58%	4	5.13%
	n=131		n=78	

The data showed that women were more likely to leave than men, minority group members were more likely to leave than whites and faculty at the assistant or lower ranking were more likely to leave than associates and full professors. Among full professors, men were twice as likely to leave as women, at the rate of 20.61% to 10.26%. In every respect but one, these findings were consistent with what was reported in the literature (Christal & Hector; Ehrenberg et al.; Hensel; Smart; Stepina & Campbell). The difference was in the finding that women in the lower ranks were more likely to leave than men at equal rank; women in this study left in proportions greater than their representation in the population. A second and complicating factor to the differences in turnover by gender was the over-representation of women at the assistant professor rank at the University, shown in Table 5. Tables 5 and 6 show that almost 59% of the women faculty and 54% of ethnic minority group members who left held rank at the assistant level. By comparison, a smaller percentage of the male faculty members who left and the majority group members were assistant professors, at the rate of 47% and 51% respectively.

Table 6
Faculty Rank by Ethnic Background

Rank	White		Minority	
	Count	% turnover group	Count	% turnover group
Full	32	17.68%	3	10.71%
Assoc.	49	27.07%	7	25.00%
Asst.	93	51.38%	15	53.57%
Other	7	3.87%	3	10.71%
	n=181		n=28	

Table 6 reflects the composition of the turnover group by rank and ethnic background. At the associate professor rank the percentages for ethnic groups were nearly uniform, 25.00% for minorities and 27.07% for whites. The percentages for those departing with the rank of full professor were lower for women and minorities than the general faculty in every category (20.61% men vs. 10.61% women; 17.68% white vs. 10.71% minorities).

Table 7
Reason for Leaving, Grouped by Gender and Ethnicity

Reason for leaving	All turnover group		Women	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Career Move	48	22.97%	16	20.15%
Career Change	114	54.55%	34	43.59%

Family/Spouse	23	11.00%	13	16.67%
Education	13	06.22%	8	10.26%
Other	11	5.26%	7	8.97%
	N=209	9n=78		

Table 7 shows the reasons given for leaving the university by three different faculty groups: the total turnover group (All), the women who left, and the ethnic minorities departing. About 55% of all respondents left for a career change, a move to private practice, or a move to enter college and university administration. Another 23% moved to continue their academic career as it was performed at this University. A total of 23% left the University for education, family, or other reasons.

The responses and percentages for women indicated that their reasons for leaving were consistent with the responses of the total turnover group except in the areas of Family (16.67% for Women, 11% All), Education (10.26% for Women, 6.22% All), and Other (8.97% for Women, 5.26% All). The categories showing the greatest departure for minorities were Career Move (32.14% Minorities, 22.97% All), Family (17.86% Minorities, 11% All), and Other (10.71% Minorities, 5.26% All). Interestingly, the relative ordering of the categories was virtually the same for all three groups, with minorities only inverting **Education** and **Other** in the position of last two places compared with **Women** and **All**, and the groups **Women** and **All** were identical at every category. The differences between these three groups were of magnitude rather than of a complete difference in orientation.

Table 8
Quality of Move Grouped by Gender and Ethnic Background

Type of new position	All turnover group		Women		Minorities	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Top 25 institution	7	3.35%	3	3.85%	2	7.14%
Peer institution	14	6.70%	3	3.85%	2	7.14%
Lower-ranked than UF	47	22.49%	18	23.08%	7	25.00%
Unranked institution	19	9.09%	4	5.13%	1	3.57%
Business/Industry	37	17.70%	9	11.54%	6	21.43%
Private Practice	52	24.88%	18	23.08%	3	10.71%
Other	33	15.79%	23	29.49%	7	25.00%
	N=209		n=78		n=28	

For the variable Quality of Move as shown on Table 8, the largest turnover occurred in the category Private Practice; one-fourth of all faculty left for that reason. The second largest turnover of faculty, 17.7%, occurred among those pursuing opportunities in business and industry.

As seen in Table 8 above, about 10% of the total group moved to universities which were rated as being equivalent or better than the University of Florida (6.70% and 3.35%). More than three times this number moved to an institution rated lower or unrated (22.49% and 9.09%). The women who left were less likely to move to an equivalently ranked institution (3.85% vs. 6.70%) or to an unrated institution (5.13% vs. 9.09%), were less likely to have accepted employment in business and industry (11.54% vs. 17.70%), and were considerably more likely to have left for other reasons (29.49% vs. 15.79%). Interestingly, minorities were much more likely to have moved to a Top 25 institution (7.14% vs. 3.35%), to work in business and industry (21.43% vs. 17.70%), or for other reasons (25.00% vs. 15.79%). Minorities were much less likely to have moved to an unranked institution (3.57% vs. 9.09%) or entered private practice (10.71% vs. 24.88%).

DISCUSSION

The aggregate rate of faculty turnover at the University of Florida was found not to be excessive. However, women and members of ethnic minorities were leaving in disproportionately high numbers. The departing faculty's reasons for leaving were of interest. Forty-two percent left the University for work at another academic institution, but the other half left academia entirely: 43% of departing faculty entered employment in business, industry, or private practice. This finding was perhaps reflective of the fiscal climate in state-supported higher education which restricted increases in financial compensation to faculty. Very productive faculty may have been induced to leave academe because of the current economic climate. While this exodus may be a problem experienced at all major institutions of higher education, it is a serious problem that should be addressed by the University community.

Equally disturbing was the quality of the colleges or universities to which many of the departing faculty moved. Of the 77 persons who left and continued working in higher education, only 7 (9%) moved to a college or university ranked higher than the University of Florida, while 14 professors (18%) moved to institutions ranked on a par with the University. Unfortunately, more than three-fourths (76%) left for positions at higher education institutions ranked below the University or those institutions that were unranked. The fact that so many departing faculty are lured to less prestigious institutions should be troubling to the entire University community. One explanation is that institutions such as this University serve as training grounds for junior faculty who go on to higher-ranking positions at less prestigious institutions or who carry their expertise into positions outside the academic community. Women and minorities were less likely to move to a lower-ranking institution, a fact which may be attributed to greater opportunities for them because of the current impetus to achieve a more equitable demographic balance among faculty at quality institutions.

Only 16% of those who left held the rank of full professor or its equivalent, although 40% of the general faculty were ranked full professor or higher. Those holding the rank associate professor or equivalent left roughly in proportion to their numbers within the entire faculty: 28% of the University faculty held this rank, a rank which accounted for 27% of the faculty turnover. Proportionally, the largest number of departing faculty came from the rank of assistant professor or its equivalent; this fact was consistent with the findings in the body of literature. Though only one-fourth of the entire faculty held such a rank, more than twice that proportion which left during FY 1989 or FY 1990, or 52%, held this rank on departure.

The fact that the lowest ranking faculty members left in such proportionally large numbers might be explained by considering that more opportunities for advancement were available for those people. In light of these findings, the fiscal climate of this state, and the review of the literature, it may be concluded that the assistant professors were most vulnerable to persuasion by offers of higher compensation by another institution. However, as previously stated, only a small percentage of departing faculty left for advancement within the realm of higher education. Did this departure from academe result from frustration experienced within the role of university faculty, or was there an institutional explanation for the turnover? More research should examine possible solutions.

An interesting element of the turnover rate was the relative frequency with which minority and women faculty chose to leave the University, predominantly from the assistant professor ranks. Minority faculty departed the University in somewhat greater proportion to their total numbers on the faculty: 10% of the entire faculty was comprised of ethnic minorities, while 13% of the turnover group was comprised of minorities. Minority faculty in the turnover group were more likely to be ranked assistant professor or other and less likely to be full professors. In this respect, the ethnic variable operated similarly to gender: at the full and associate professor ranks, whites were more likely to leave than ethnic minorities, just as men were more likely to leave than women of equal rank.

Women faculty appear to be leaving university positions in extraordinarily large numbers. While women held 16% of the general faculty positions at the University, 36% of the faculty who left the University between 1989 and 1991 were women and almost 60% were at the rank of assistant, clearly a disproportionately high number. Furthermore, women faculty by and large left for reasons different from those of the men who left. Among all professors who left, 23% made a career move, compared with 20% of the women departing. Interestingly, 32% of minorities

reported making a career move. Also, 55% of all departing faculty left for a career change or advancement within higher education, compared with only 44% of departing women and 35% of minorities.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the nature of the data collection, this study should be considered a preliminary report with several trends that should be investigated more fully. People do change jobs on a regular basis. However, in an institution such as the University, when one group of people leaves with greater frequency than others, there is need to ask if this is normal turnover. Faculty are leaving the academic community entirely. Assistant professors are leaving at a greater rate than faculty from other ranks. This is especially true for women and minorities. The following questions must be addressed: does a university have a responsibility for training junior faculty to assume positions at other institutions? Does the academic community have a responsibility for preparing professors for a career in business and industry?

Is there perhaps a deeper concern? Is there a culture-and climate issue wherein the majority group of tenured white males form a culture based on their own rules, and expect women and minorities to succeed by those same rules or by an even more stringent measure, in order to be accepted within the institution? This concern may be especially true for women faculty, who may decide that the resulting struggle to succeed is not worth the effort. The data from this study seem to support this contention. There is need to study the culture and climate issue as it relates specifically to women and minorities.

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